

Blood center's cell phone text-alert system launches

By Rich Suwanski, Messenger-Inquirer
Published: Saturday, August 15, 2009 12:22 AM CDT

The Western Kentucky Regional Blood Center launched two new projects this week with a Web site and text-alert system to reach donors to explain their needs.

To receive the text alerts, donors must sign up at www.wkrbc.org.

WKRBC's current need is O positive and O negative blood.

The center needs an average of 55 units of blood per day to cover the needs of Daviess, McLean, Ohio, Hancock and Breckinridge counties, with a subcenter in Hopkinsville that serves Crittenden, Christian and Caldwell counties.

"We're meeting our goal, but we are still begging for donors," said Vicki S. Ellis, director of donor services with WKRBC. "This year has been a little different, though. Maybe it has to do with the economy, but people who don't absolutely have to have surgery are not having it, so we've seen a slight decrease in blood needs."

Ellis said, however, that one never knows when a crisis will arise.

"We have to have enough blood on hand for six hospitals," she said.

Each unit of blood donated is separated into red cells, plasma and platelets. The shelf life for red cells is 42 days. Plasma is frozen for up to a year, and platelets have a five-day shelf life.

"We have blood drives daily to keep the platelet supplies coming in," Ellis said.

Donors can give a unit, which equals one pint, of whole blood every eight weeks. Platelets can be donated every three days.

Donors must first register with WKRBC with a mini-physical and medical history questionnaire.

"We need to eliminate anyone who is anemic or unhealthy to donate," Ellis said.

Blood donation takes from five to 10 minutes.

Upcoming blood drives open to the public (unless otherwise noted) are as follows:

- Kendall Kidd Benefit Blood Drive, Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Owensboro Christian Church Community Room.
- At the Masonville Fire Department, Tuesday, from 4 to 9 p.m.
- Texas Gas employee-only drive, Wednesday, from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- At Cloverport United Methodist Church, Thursday, from noon to 6 p.m.
- At Sam's Club, Aug. 21, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

WKRBC is open for donations Monday through Friday at 3015 Old Hartford Road. For more information, call 684-9296.

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